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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT LOUIS 000066

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/18/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [MP](#)
SUBJECT: CHARGE'S QUARTERLY CALL ON MAURITIAN PRIME
MINISTER RAMGOOLAM

REF: A. PORT LOUIS 49
[1](#)B. PORT LOUIS 64
[1](#)C. SECSTATE 13422
[1](#)D. PORT LOUIS 62

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Virginia M. Blaser for reasons 1.4 (b
and d).

1.(C) SUMMARY: On February 19, Charge met with Mauritian
Prime Minister Ramgoolam to discuss the PM's recent trip to
the United States for the annual Prayer Breakfast. The PM
seemed pleased with the trip, although disappointed not to
meet President Obama during the breakfast. The PM's efforts
to build an education-sharing program with University of
Maryland had him the most animated, while realities of
pushing GOM goals on Diego Garcia proved more sobering. END
SUMMARY.

US TRIP - DIEGO GARCIA - UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

[1](#)2. (C) During Charge's quarterly meeting with Prime Minister
Ramgoolam (PM) on February 19, the PM reviewed his recent
trip to the United States, covering many of the issues as
expressed in ref C. He echoed reftel statements that he
understood the Department of State position vis-a-vis Diego
Garcia was that the GOM must take the issue up with the UK,
not the US. He noted that negotiations with the UK are
continuing, and that he hoped they would begin soon at
"higher levels." The PM expressed great enthusiasm for his
discussions with the University of Maryland for education
exchange opportunities, and said he has asked the Mauritian
Ambassador to the US to spearhead efforts to bring an
agreement forward quickly.

PLANS TO REQUEST POTUS MEETING - ATTENDANCE AT UNGA

[1](#)3. (C) The PM expressed disappointment at not meeting
President Obama at the prayer breakfast, adding that he had
thought that all heads of state attending the breakfast would
have the opportunity to see the President separately. The PM
said he will forward through his Embassy an official request
for an appointment with the President sometime this year. He
was willing, he added, to make a special trip to Washington
to meet with the U.S. President if a date could be arranged.
Alternatively, he would seek a meeting on the margins of the
UN General Assembly, which the PM plans to attend in
September. (NOTE: The PM did not attend the UNGA last year.)

ZIMBABWE

[1](#)4. (C) The PM expressed satisfaction that the situation in

Zimbabwe had shifted in recent weeks, while noting "grave concern" over the recent arrests of MDC senior party leaders. The PM agreed that Mauritius should look to support Botswana and other initiatives in SADC to assist with the continuing problems in Zimbabwe. The PM reminded Charge that the President of Zimbabwe will be the senior representative for Mauritian Independence celebrations planned for mid-March 2009, and implied this trip would give Mauritius a chance to show support for Botswana's efforts.

US ASSISTANCE AND MAURITIAN PEACEKEEPERS

15. (C) Charge reviewed the number of current USG-sponsored training programs taking place in coming months, including separate training programs being run by FBI, NCIS, Coast Guard, DHS and AFRICOM and the March African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) program. The Charge added that the ACSS would have elements of peacekeeping in the agenda, and thanked the PM for his support to bring a larger group of Mauritian police into peacekeeping teams. The PM replied that he understood it was time for Mauritius to take a more responsible role and he would continue to support this effort. The PM also expressed interest in the planned U.S. Department of Energy program for radioactive material safeguards.

SHIFTS IN THE PM'S OFFICE

PORT LOUIS 00000066 002 OF 002

16. (C) Due to the grave illness of his cabinet secretary and the unexpected demise of Home Affairs Secretary Raj Madhoo (who died on February 16 during the Chinese President's visit), the PM noted that a number of shifts will be made in his office in coming weeks. In the interim, his senior secretary will serve as the cabinet secretary for purposes of taking notes at cabinet meetings. The Home Affairs director will be filled "very quickly." His options for both positions are in short supply, as due to legal requirements he may only fill the posts with Senior Civil Servants. Finding one with the right experience, whom he can trust to be discreet, may be difficult, he told the Charge.

COMMENT

17. (C) From a public relations perspective, the PM's trip to the US was less than ideal. In advance of the trip, a number of press outlets quoted him and other government officials as saying he would be meeting Obama. (The PM denies he said that and accuses the press of simply getting the facts wrong). There was open criticism of his being away from the country for a "non-substantive" trip to the United States. After the trip, it was widely stated in the press that he sat with the Secretary of State at the breakfast. Again, according to the PM, this was incorrect. In the end, the PM had no deliverables to provide critics of his US trip and basically stayed quiet about his U.S. trip upon his return. Instead he shifted his public comments to the (then pending) Chinese President visit.

18. (C) With regard to the staff losses in the PM's office, the PM continues to discuss with the Embassy his distrust of his cabinet and of PM office subordinates. His unwillingness to discuss his ideas and plans with others sometimes leads him to make poor choices (such as overboard remarks in his speech to the Chinese President described in reftel B). The vacancies left by the loss of both senior PM office civil servants will be difficult to fill, but it appears the current Mauritian Ambassador to the US will return in coming months to fill the long vacant chief of cabinet position.

This will help with management of PM issues -- an important need because the PM holds so many decisions in his own hands and delegates little to his cabinet -- and should also help USG efforts by providing a pro-US interlocutor very close to the PM.

BLASER